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School Committee Minutes 05-28-2002

**The Arlington School Committee
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, May 28, 2002**

Present: David McKenna, Chair Joani LaMachia
Suzanne Owayda, Vice Chair Denis Sullivan
Paul Schlichtman, Secretary Martin Thrope
Barbara Goodman

Superintendent: Kay Donovan
Asst. Supt. Joanne Gurry
Chief Financial Officer David Kale
Special Education Director Marilyn Bisbicos

Call to Order: 7:35 pm

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- “ Liane Cronin, former APS employee requested that the School Committee meet with her to resolve issues involving an agreement between her and the Superintendent that Ms. Cronin feels have not been addressed.
- “ Lynette Culverhouse, Mary Fusconi, and Stanley Pollack, Arlington residents representing CARE requested that the School Committee take action relative to implementing the MCAS requirement in order for seniors to receive their diplomas.
- “ Rick Sharf, Ottoson teacher also urged the School Committee to pass the Brookline Resolution sponsored by MASC that “asserts the right of local school committees to grant high school diplomas to all students who meet their school district’s requirements for graduation and who have demonstrated competency in a common core of skills measured by a variety of assessment instruments”.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Mr. Schlichtman reviewed correspondence.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was unanimously Voted to approve the regular meeting minutes of April 23, 2002.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was
Voted to release the executive session minutes of October 11, 2001. 6-0-1 Mr. Thrope abstain

Mr. McKenna, referring to correspondence received from the Arlington Education Association, stated that he was disappointed to read that the AEA was not willing to consider a proposal from the Superintendent that requested that the association consider a waiver of the English teachers' status of teaching four periods per day for two years.

In response to Mr. Thrope's requested clarification (on how a group is placed on the school committee agenda) Mr. McKenna stated that any interested person may contact the School Committee Office or the Superintendent's office and state their desire.

CANCER RELAY

Peter Villandry informed the Committee that the Cancer Relay will be at Peirce Field on June 14th and June 15th. Mr. Villandry explained that the relay provides an opportunity for the community to participate in the fight against cancer, raise community awareness, as well as raise money.

BUDGET UPDATE/TOWN MEETING

Alan Tosti chair of the Finance Committee addressed the committee relative to restored local aid, rising health costs and the financial outlook for FY2004. Even with level funded local aid it still puts the Town approximately \$1.2 million in debt, which will be made up with cash reserves. Mr. Tosti expects that in FY04 we will be in substantial trouble again due to fixed costs that continue to increase and not receiving the local aid that we have in the past. The Town must somehow raise more revenues in the Town for FY04.

Mr. Tosti reviewed the handout on local aid versus health insurance from 1995-2003 that equals an increase of 113.96%. Alan is hoping that Town Meeting will resume on June 10th and finish in two or three meetings.

Mr. Tosti thanked the School Committee and the Superintendent for the positive discussion and contributions during the entire process.

Supt. Donovan referred the Committee to the budget packet. The final budget recommendations were based upon meetings with the central office, all of the principals and department heads. The Finance Committee voted a bottom line budget figure of \$32,000,100.00, and that is what will be included in the Finance Committee's recommendation to the full Town Meeting.

David Kale, CFO outlined the Revised Reduction and Reallocation Listing (attached) which is the revised listing totaling \$920,977.00 in cuts. Section A of the list reflects the recommended reductions submitted previously to the School Committee with the exception of the AEA proposal for \$144,000.00 which was not accepted and a proposed increase in instrumental music fees by \$50.00, from \$125.00 to \$175.00.

Section B includes recommended changes to the total reduction list: restoring four teaching positions, one part-time clerical position, Principal's assistant stipends and adding a small amount for textbooks.

The Supt. answered questions from the Committee on class size, impact on programs, changes in guidance, the number of positions lost, grant money, chapter 70 funding, and the budget process itself.

After a length discussion by Committee Members and the Superintendent the following motion was made:

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was

Voted that the School Committee adopt the budget proposals recommended by the Superintendent.

Mr. Thrope moved to divide the question line by line, no second.

Vote on Mr. Schlichtman's motion: 5 yes-2 no votes (Ms. Owayda & Mr. Thrope no)

Mr. Thrope stated his no vote reflects his stated concerns with the budget process expressed from the very beginning that those same concerns remain and that he cannot vote the product of that process.

Ms. Owayda explained that her no vote was due to the fact that she needed more explanation on the guidance issue; however Ms. Owayda stated that the budget process has been a full one and Supt. Donovan and David Kale have answered any budget concerns she encountered.

Mr. Sullivan stated that it was a difficult budget year and he would like to go to Town Meeting with as much of an endorsement as possible.

Ms. LaMachia stated that budget talk started in December, and that we have had the budget books for months. Committee Members have had the opportunity to go through the books individually and as a Committee, and to make recommendations to the Superintendent and the CFO. Joani continued stating that the budget subcommittee was formed to deal with specific budget items and that she does not recall Mr. Thrope making a request to the subcommittee to review the budget line by line.

Ms. Goodman pointed out that the budget process could always be improved. Every time she had a suggestion she was heard by the administration. She did not always like the answers but they were reasoned and the logic behind them were professional.

Ms. Goodman requested that the School Committee hold another hearing on the budget for Town Meeting members before it goes for a vote to Town Meeting.

On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was unanimously

Voted to start the School Committee meeting of June 11th at 6:30 pm with a public budget hearing at 7:30 PM.

Mr. Schlichtman stated that we have a responsibility to have a finished budget in place, that \$32 million is not an adequate figure to run a school system. Paul did state that he has had misgivings about some of the things that we have had to do, but that at this point, weighing all the choices, he does not have any better ideas.

Mr. McKenna emphasized his disappointment that the AEA was not able to help us out, stating that the savings would amount to \$144,000.00 on a two-year commitment. He is also concerned about increasing the athletic and music fees. Dave agreed that it is time to take a look at the guidance department and to be sure that it is user

friendly for all students.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

.. Budget Subcommittee

Ms. LaMachia reported that Representative Marzilli spoke at the subcommittee on kindergarten funding, Chapter 70 and the SBAB regulations. Mr. Marzilli recommended continued discussion and indicated that there still may be grant money available for the full day kindergarten program.

AHS GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS VOTE

Ms. Goodman stated that the curriculum subcommittee met on May 8th with Mr. Woodcock, representatives from the school council and department heads to review the proposed change in graduation requirements. The subcommittee did vote Mr. Woodcock's proposed requirements with the addition of a two-year foreign language requirement effective for the Class of 2006. Ms. Goodman explained that since that meeting Mr. Woodcock requested that the requirement be effective for the Class of 2007 in order to avoid a one or two year course over-subscription.

On a motion by Ms. Goodman and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was unanimously
Voted to accept the proposed graduation requirements for Arlington High School effective for the Class of 2007.

STRATTON SCHOOL DEDICATION VOTE

On a motion by Ms. Owayda seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was unanimously
Voted to dedicate the horseshoe driveway in front of the Stratton School "Walsh Way".

IDA ROBBINS SCHOLARSHIP VOTE

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was unanimously
Voted to approve the students recommended by Supt. Donovan to receive the Ida Robbins Scholarship.

VOTE ON SCHOOL CHOICE

On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was unanimously
Voted that the School Committee adopt the Superintendent's recommendation that APS does not participate as a receiving school in School Choice for the next school year 2002-2003.

NEW BUSINESS

- .. **Field Trip Approval** – On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was unanimously
Voted to approve the Dallin School field trip to Canobie Lake.
- .. **Staff Appreciation** – Wednesday, June 5th 2:45 PM at Ottoson Middle School
- .. **AHS Awards Night** – Thursday June 6th 7:00 PM at AHS
- .. **AHS Graduation** - Sunday June 9th 1:00 PM at AHS.
- .. **June 24th & 25th** – the Central Administration will be attending a workshop with the Reading and Danvers Administrators on best practices.

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was unanimously
Voted to send Mr. Schlichtman's letter objecting to House Budget Amendments 1509 and 1510 (which would reduce or eliminate Chapter 70 funding for school districts that challenge the state board of Education's mandate to withhold diplomas from students who do pass the MCAS), to reps. Marzilli, Paulsen, Kaufman, Senator Havern and Cambridge and Hampshire Regional School Committees.

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was
Voted to adopt the Brookline resolution (that asserts the right of local school committees to grant high school diplomas to all students who meet their school districts requirements for graduation...) with one change; paragraph #5 change the word "as a graduation requirement" to 'as the sole graduation requirement'. 6-1 Mr. McKenna voted no

Mr. Thrope moved that at our next meeting we place on the agenda a consideration by this committee of a resolution substantially similar to that as Cambridge School Committee regarding MCAS as a graduation requirement, no second.

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was unanimously
Voted that Mr. Thrope's request to consider a resolution similar to that of the Cambridge School Committee be referred to the curriculum and instruction subcommittee.

Mr. Thrope voiced concern that this particular issue is of such importance that it would be better addressed by the full committee. Mr. McKenna pointed out that this would be an appropriate forum for the CARE group to participate in (at

the discretion of the chair). Mr. Schlichtman stated that he would invite a representative from MASC and would receive opinions from the full committee, however, it will not be on the subcommittee meeting agenda of June 4th.

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was voted to enter EXECUTIVE SESSION to discuss a legal issue with not further business to be conducted upon return to open session except to adjourn. RC: Unanimous

Executive Session 11:00 – 11:35 PM

On a motion made and seconded it was
Unanimously voted to adjourn at 11:35 PM